



The Amateur in You, Part 1

What have you been pondering?



You and the Baofeng

As I was stopped at a light in town one day, a vehicle badly in need of a muffler pulled up beside me in the next lane. It was a Lamborghini, and it looked new and very sporty. For a moment, I pictured myself in the driver's seat of that shiny car, until reality set in. I could never afford the taxes and maintenance cost of that sports car, let alone purchase one. Then again, after another reality check, I realized that the driver of that car was probably just going to the store, and my little car can get me to the store just as effectively.

Baofeng has produced what is probably the greatest amateur radio that has even been sold, the UV-5R. In my opinion, that single model has revolutionized the world of amateur radio by placing the modern technology of ham in the hands of the average licensee, due to its price point and features.

Sold for anywhere from \$16 to \$30, this little marvel can be purchased by the most modest of income earners. The UV-5R (and many other models) have these unique features:

- FM broadcast listening
- Flashlight
- Ability to transmit outside amateur bands (including FRS, GMRS, and MURS)
- Dual-band and dual-watch
- Can set separate transmit and receive CTCSS tones

In addition, most Baofeng models feature

- Easy manual programming
- Supported by CHIRP
- Loud, clear audio
- Transmitted audio is indistinguishable from that of more expensive brands
- Very durable / rugged outer shell

- Accessories can include an alkaline battery case for many models

It's true that many Baofeng radios are not manufactured by the high-quality standards that some others are, just like my little Nissan isn't as high-quality as a Lamborghini might be. But I can afford a pair of Baofeng radios, which work just as well as one of the others that costs four times the price.

Also, the fact that a Baofeng radio can transmit outside the amateur bands is a bit concerning to some long-time amateurs. They feel that new hams can't be trusted with such a device, because they might accidentally, or even deliberately, transmit on non-amateur frequencies, which is not legal with most Baofeng radios. Of course, my car is able to exceed the speed limit, so I wonder whether those same folks trust me to drive.

And yes, it's not legal to use a Baofeng to communicate on FRS, GMRS, or MURS frequencies, for example. But if my life truly depended on it, you can bet that those legalities will likely be the last thing on my mind.

Some people love to point out the fact that some Baofeng radios emit an illegal signal, which is true. If they took the effort to examine their own HT, they might be unpleasantly surprised to find that most HTs suffer from this issue. That's not to excuse the bad emission, because we should all adhere to the law the best we know how, like obeying the speed limit.

My purpose is to help you feel better about owning and using a Baofeng radio, whether or not you've been accosted by one of the vocal nay-sayers who love to put them down. Rest assured that you own a valuable and worthy piece of amateur radio history.

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